



Mayor Jim Gray

LEXINGTON-FAYETTE URBAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Division of Fire and Emergency Services
Fire Prevention

Keith Jackson, Fire Chief

Michael Farmer, Fire Marshal

Fire Safety In Apartments

Fires in residences always present special problems because of the potential for loss of life. When the residence happens to be in an apartment building, whether the building has two units or a hundred and two, the problems are multiplied many times over. The residents, property owner, and the fire department can all work together to make apartment living safe and apartment fires survivable.

The Fire Prevention Bureau of the Lexington Fire Department has put together this information to give some practical advice on fire prevention, code compliance and general safety tips.

General Fire Safety Tips

- **Plan your escape** – Make an escape plan and hold regular fire drills so everyone in your apartment knows what to do in an emergency. Make sure everyone knows where your meeting place is and remember . . . *Once you are out, stay out! Don't go back in for anything!*
- **Cook Safely** – Cooking is the leading cause of fires in apartments. Never leave cooking unattended. Always keep cooking areas clean and uncluttered.
- **Be Careful with smoking materials** – Smoking is the #1 cause of fire related deaths in America. Never smoke in bed or when under the influence of alcohol or medication. Wet the contents of ashtrays before emptying them.
- **Hide matches and lighters** – Keep matches and lighters away from children. Store them up high in a locked cabinet.
- **Use electricity safely** – Replace damaged electrical cords. Tell the manager about electrical outlets or appliances that smell, smoke, or overheat. Don't overload electrical circuits.

Your first line of defense in surviving a fire is a working smoke alarm. Your apartment should have a smoke alarm outside the sleeping rooms and at least one alarm on each level of your unit. You should test battery powered alarms every week. Test electrically powered ones every month. Report non-working smoke alarms to the building manager.

GRILLS: For other than one and two family dwellings, no hibachi, gas-fired (propane), charcoal grill or other similar devices used for cooking, heating, or any other purpose, shall be *used, stored or kindled* on any balcony or under any overhanging portion or within 10 feet (3m) of any structure. Listed electric ranges, grills, or similar electrical apparatus shall be permitted. **(NFPA 1, 2012 EDITION, Chapter 10)**

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If the building has common areas such as hallways, lobbies, etc., the following things are required:

- All apartment doors must have an automatic closer. This is very important because it helps to keep the hallway clear of smoke and helps slow down the spread of fire.
- The path of egress must have a source of constant lighting that cannot be turned off with a switch.
- Stairway doors must remain closed unless they are held open by a device that will allow the door to close if the alarm sounds. The stairway may be your only way to the ground and the doors should always be closed to keep smoke and fire from entering the stairway and cutting of your escape.
- There should be interconnected smoke alarms in the hallways.
- Depending on the height and size of your building, it may be required to have sprinklers or an alarm system.

Make sure that hallways and stairs are kept clear of trash and obstructions.

If your building has an elevator, **never** use it during a fire. It may stop between floors or on the fire floor itself. Always use the stairs.

Your apartment door should not have a double-keyed deadbolt on it. There should only be thumbturn locks on apartment doors.

Every bedroom should have an operable window. There should be no more than 44" from the floor to the bottom of the window and large enough for an adult to climb through. If the window is higher than that, inform the manager. A step may have to be added to reduce the height of the window. If the room does not have an operable window, it is a code violation to use it as a bedroom unless the apartment has a sprinkler system.

Test doors before you open them. If the door or knob feels hot find another way out. If you can't find a second way out, stay where you are and stuff something under the door to keep out smoke and heat. Go to a window and attract someone's attention with a flashlight or by waving something light colored out the window. Use a telephone to call 9-1-1 and tell them exactly where you are in the building. Do this even if fire trucks are already on scene. If you have to escape through smoke, remember to crawl low. Cleaner, cooler air will be 10" to 24" above the floor.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION OR WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST AN INSPECTION, CALL THE LEXINGTON FIRE PREVENTION OFFICE, (859)-231-5668.